



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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Contact – Office of Erie County Comptroller at Comptroller@Erie.gov, or 716.858.8400

BAIL REVENUE DRASTICALLY DOWN IN ERIE COUNTY

Soft on crime politicians implemented bail reform that puts offenders back on the streets quickly and not behind bars, leading to a drop in revenue

(HAMBURG) – Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr. issued a report on a drastic drop in bail revenue collected for the first six months of this year, which falls far short of what was anticipated for the 2021 budget. The report also shows other revenue streams are far short of anticipated budget projections, related to DWI fines and those penalized for illegally parking in handicapped spots.

Erie County is also falling short on anticipated revenue for bail collection, which is ultimately collected in the Office of Erie County Comptroller. While the 2021 budget anticipated bail collection revenue to be \$5,000 for the year, so far for the first six months of 2021 Erie County collected \$356.

“Soft on crime politicians let accused criminals run free. They want them out of jail and out on your street. We can tell more and more people charged with a crime are back in neighborhoods and not behind bars where they belong. This significant drop in bail revenue proves accused criminals are cuffed, put in a cop car, and turned loose in neighborhoods across Erie County,” said Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr.

Revenue collected from town and village courts for three Erie County programs; STOP-DWI, Alternatives to Incarceration, and Handicapped Education are also drastically down. The report found that, to date, fees collected to help fund these programs fall well below what was anticipated in the 2021 budget. Revenue adjustments may need to be made by the Erie County Legislature to ensure these programs continue to be properly funded.

A total of \$118,889 was collected in DWI fees for Erie County from 660 incidents in the local court system through the first half of 2021. The 2021 Erie County budget anticipates collecting \$700,007 in total revenue for the DWI program for the entire 12 months of the year, while the county actually collected \$118,889 for the first six months of the year.

Of the DWI fines collected every year across Erie County, 65% are paid back to the arresting police agency within a town or village, and the remaining 35% is provided to Erie County to create a STOP-DWI campaign to inform the public about the dangers of driving while intoxicated, supervise offenders, investigate DWI crashes, and provide services to victims.

The revenue reduction should provide a guide and a warning to program directors that this revenue stream be closely monitored in order to plan accordingly for continued proper funding of the program.

“Driving drunk is dangerous and deadly. Offenders need to be closely monitored. Hundreds of thousands of dollars less than anticipated to pay for these programs is a serious issue that should be addressed soon,” said Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw.

Erie County receives 50% of the revenue from some traffic violations to help fund its Handicapped Parking Education Program, or \$15 of the \$30 collected. The program provides education, advocacy and increased awareness of handicapped parking laws. For the first half of 2021 Erie County received \$2,450 from towns and villages, and another \$4,335 from the City of Buffalo. In total, Erie County collected \$6,785 for the program, or 26.6% of the Erie County 2021 budget estimated surcharge revenues of \$25,500.

“All of these programs are very important in terms of educating the public and keeping our streets and communities safe. Revenue coming in is way off what was projected. Lawmakers need to look at how they are going to continue providing the necessary resources in order to keep the programs running. I hope this report can help serve as a guide for them to plan and protect taxpayers,” concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

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